Regional Advisory Report

of the

Regional Transportation Advisory Committee
RTAC 4

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One

Executive Summary

The Maine Department of Transportation (DOT) is required by law to create a Twenty Year Transportation Plan, and to update it periodically. To assist in developing this plan, and with its programming responsibilities, the DOT solicits a Regional Advisory Report from each of seven Regional Transportation Advisory Committees (RTAC), and contracts with regional councils (KVCOG) to guide the RTAC through the process and create the reports.

RTAC Region Four occupies the west-central part of Maine, and consists of Kennebec and Somerset Counties and a portion of Waldo County. The area is predominately rural, with no Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and a total population of approximately 170,000. The largest city is Augusta, with just under 20,000 people. Much of Somerset County is unincorporated. The northern 2/3 of the region is very hilly, with few roads or residents; almost all of the transportation system lies in the southern third of the region. Within this area, there continues a significant suburbanization of the population, with cities declining in residents and small towns growing.

The principal mode of transportation in the region is via highway for both passengers and freight. The Maine Turnpike and I95 form the backbone of the highway system. Principal Arterials include US 2 (east-to-west in Somerset County), US 201 (north-to-south throughout the region) and State 3/US 202 (east-to-west in southern Kennebec County.) An extensive system of collector roads serves all municipalities. Rail freight service consists of Guilford Transportation (Springfield Terminal) and several minor carriers. No intercity passenger service is available. Public transportation services are provided by Kennebec Valley Transit. The region has one passenger airport (Augusta) and several freight and general aviation airports.

In developing this report, the RTAC began with a base of data from its 1997 Report, updated by KVCOG. This data is reflected in sections 2 and 3 of the report. It also sought out the thoughts and suggestions of transportation stakeholders in a series of outreach efforts described in section 4. In its deliberations, the RTAC identified a series of findings, which are highlighted in sections 2 and 3. These findings attempt to profile the major issues that the RTAC views in this region.

The RTAC was directed by DOT to provide a prioritized set of policy recommendations as the culmination of this report. These recommendations form the basis of section 5. Rather than attempt to address each element of the transportation system, the RTAC chose to evaluate the relative importance of all of the issues and concentrate on only those it viewed as priorities. After discussion, balloting, and recasting, the RTAC arrived at a set of goals. These goals are tiered as "First, Second, Third Priority." It must be noted that the assignment of "Third Priority" does not

mean the bottom of the list. Many other issues were discussed and ultimately did not make it onto the priority listing.

The regional goals are as stated:

FIRST:

- Improve the movement of highway freight, to serve the regional economy and minimize negative traffic impacts.
- Increase usage of publicly-funded transit systems.
- Recognize that Transportation and Community Development issues are fundamentally interrelated, and work towards implementation of a unified approach.

SECOND:

- Make collector road improvements in such a way as will benefit from and support local and regional land use planning.
- Restoration of rail passenger service to this Region.
- Improve linkages between passenger modes of travel.

THIRD:

- Improve the East-West movement of traffic and goods within this region, using the most cost-effective means available, including existing alignments.
- Increased usage of rail freight system.
- Continue to improve and connect the regional bicycle and pedestrian networks.
- Maintain regional connectivity to national and international air travel networks.

Each of these goals is supported by a series of strategies to move the Department towards them. These strategies are listed in section 5.

Two

Regional Overview

DOT's Region 4 consists of Kennebec and Somerset Counties in their entirety, and three towns in western Waldo County. Its geographical orientation is a north-south band running just a little west of the center of Maine. The region reaches tidal waters in the southern Kennebec towns, and to Canada at its northern border. The state capital of Augusta, together with Waterville and Skowhegan are the population and job centers, while the remainder of the region is predominantly rural. The median population of towns is 1,800.

Cultural Trends:

Our transportation system is designed to meet the needs of the communities that it serves, for the movement of people and the exchange of goods and services. As those needs evolve, the system must adapt. The three findings expressed in this section illustrate how trends within this region will affect the design and function of our transportation system.

The most commonly-used measure of change within a region is the change in population size. If that were our sole criterion, though, Region 4 would have experienced no change. The U.S. Census for 2000 puts the region's population at 171,996, a bare increase of about 2,500 (1.5 percent) from the 1990 Census of 169,251. This slow rate of growth reflects somewhat the recession of the early 90's, though we have now recovered in terms of jobs and construction levels. In spite of the slow growth rate, we are seeing changes in transportation demand engendered not by population growth but by changes within the population and the communities themselves.

Finding: Continued decline in household size, together with an aging population and multiple wage earners in the households, triggers demand for more transportation.

Despite census figures showing only 2,500 new residents, municipal reports for the past decade indicate 8,196 new, year-round housing units. How can this be? It is because there are, on average fewer people living in each house.

Total Households in Region, 1990	65,348
Total Households in Region, 2000	69,699
Average Persons per Household, 1990	2.59
Average Persons per Household, 2000	2.40
New households attributable to growth	1,144
New households attributable to fewer Persons per Household	3,207

Source: U.S. Census, KVCOG

As the number of households in this region grew, the long-term trend toward smaller household sizes accounts for more new households than population growth. As Table I (prior page) shows, about three new houses were built to accommodate reduced household size for every one built to accommodate growth.

Decreases in the average number of persons per household, driven by trends such as fewer children, single-parent households, and longer-lived seniors, is generally thought of as a social phenomenon. But influences on transportation patterns are significant. Each new household means a new set of transportation demands. Elderly and poor households, in particular, rely more heavily on public transportation.

A principal contributor to travel demand is the journey to work. Nearly half of all vehicle trips are either to or from the workplace. The increase in the number of single-parent (thus, single worker) households is balanced by the increased number of two-worker households. Over the past several decades, the average number of wage-earners per household has remained steady at about 1.27, which allows us to conclude that travel demand is more closely linked to household formation than population growth.

Finding: New patterns of development, nurtured by our investment in transportation infrastructure in the past half-century, are now overwhelming the ability of the infrastructure to sustain them.

In the long history of civilization, our transportation modes have evolved, from foot to horse to oxcart to boat to train to automobile. At each stage, our civilization has shaped and been shaped by the prevailing mode of travel. We now have a highly capital-intensive transportation system that nevertheless allows us to get to any destination in a relatively short period of time. As a result, distance has become a cheap commodity.

We see this expressed in contemporary patterns of development, where the cost of transportation is really a minor consideration. In many quarters, this pattern of development is described as "sprawl," though in central Maine, it is more complex than that. Table III, below, shows that between 1980 and 1990, population in the "service center" towns of Augusta, Waterville, and Skowhegan declined by 400, while the region's population grew by 15,000. The 2000 figures indicate that the same service centers house only 42,989 residents, while the region's population grew to 171,996. In 20 years, our largest towns have gone from 31 percent of the population total to 25 percent. In terms of new homes, the service centers accounted for less than 9 percent of housing built in the past decade.

Job Concentration in Region 4		
	1980	1990
Jobs in Augusta, Waterville, Skowhegan	34,018	43,532
Total Jobs in Region	43,848	54,685
Percentage in Job Centers	77.6 %	79.6 %

Source: U.S. Census

Population Dispersal in Region 4		
	1980	1990
Population in Augusta, Waterville, Skowhegan	47,696	47,223
Total Pop. in Region	154,589	169,251
Percentage in Job Centers	30.9 %	27.9 %

Source: U.S. Census

At the same time that residential development has been sprawling, however, the commercial side has been centralizing. Table II illustrates job locations for the 1980 and 1990 census years (2000 not yet available). Jobs are selected as indicative of both employment destinations and retail/service trip ends. Between 1980 and 1990, the three service centers accrued nearly 88 percent of all new jobs in the region, to increase their share from 77 to 79 percent. When the 2000 data is available, it will show what we already know anecdotally -- that in the 90's again, nearly all new commercial development, from big box stores to call centers, have located in the service centers, while small-town mills and village stores close their doors. This concentration of trip destinations, equally with the dispersal of new housing, is responsible for the increase in travel demand.

These trends reflect the change in demands on the highway system within the region. Based on traffic counts reported by DOT, primarily in 1993 and 1998, traffic growth on the region's intercity roads – the Arterials – has been minimal or non-existent. State Routes 3 and 27, and federal highways 2, 201, and 202, while carrying anywhere from 2,000 to 15,000 vehicles per day, generally showed increases of only a few hundred trips per day over the five year period. The only exception was Route 201 between Fairfield and Madison, recording increases of anywhere between 10 and 40 percent at its various counting stations.

The other component of the transportation system – the Collectors – carries fewer cars, as a rule, but is seeing much more dramatic increases in traffic. In some cases, we are still talking 200 cars per day increases (but with totals of only 1-2,000 to start with), but in others, such as Route 17 in Readfield, Route 100 in Clinton, and Route 234 in Anson, traffic has nearly doubled between 1993 and 1998. In Region 4, the function of Collectors is generally to carry traffic between rural/suburban areas and service centers. Collectors are, in small towns, also the most likely location of new residential (sprawl) development, and are increasingly becoming burdened by access management issues.

The emerging issue within Region 4 is the ability of the transportation system to meet the demands of new development, primarily between the developing suburbs and the strengthening commercial centers. The arterial system has historically received the lion's share of traffic, and of attention and funding. Alternatives to the arterial system are emerging, with intercity bus,

vanpooling, and rail service (both freight and passenger). But it is the collector system which is the concern of every municipal official, for which few alternatives are available, and, until recently, has been the orphan child of highway funding formulas.

Finding: Economic growth and Community well-being depend on our ability to manage our transportation system efficiently.

After a decade of slow growth, central Maine is poised to surge forward again on the growth charts. The rapid growth (and sprawl) of the Portland area is beginning to affect communities at the southern end of the region, and throughout this region, economic development initiatives are beginning to bear fruit.

Economic growth hinges on the quality of transportation. Business needs an efficient system to move goods back and forth. A more efficient transportation system also broadens the pool of available workers.

There are two weak links in the transportation system from the perspective of economic growth. First, the highway system must function efficiently. This is more than just good pavement. Uncontrolled growth along the region's arterials and collector roads, while a short term source of jobs and growth, in the long term increases the cost of transportation (lost time in congestion, increased maintenance costs, increase in crash rates) and reduces the profitability of business. Second, there must be competition among transportation modes to ensure efficiency. The availability of rail, air, and marine options, particularly for manufacturers, provides businesses the opportunity to find the most cost-effective shipping option. Locally, the availability of bus service, ride-sharing, or bicycle alternatives provides workers and patrons with opportunity to find the most cost-effective way of getting their business done, as well.

Until recently, individual municipalities had the sole responsibility for managing growth along state and federal highways (with some exceptions). Towns could control the design and location of new development through methods as simple as a road ordinance or as complex as a comprehensive zoning ordinance. KVCOG monitors local growth management efforts. The table below summarizes activity among the 59 towns in the region as of the end of 2001. "Development pressure" refers to either an active development market or high traffic levels on state roads throughout the region.

STATUS OF LOCAL ACCESS MANAGEMENT	Development pressure:	
	High	Low
Towns with comprehensive land use and access management regulation	8	5
Towns with site review/other regulation of curb cuts	4	3
Towns with little or no access management	10	29

Source: KVCOG

Table IV

The table shows that only 12 of the 22 towns in this region with a significant level of development activity or traffic have access management controls similar to DOT's new rules that regulate the design and location of access onto the arterial system. Though these rules do not directly address local land use planning, the Department is also beginning a program to assist towns in recognizing the link between transportation and land use planning. At least 17 of the 39 towns with "little access management" have adopted comprehensive plans which support the concept.

The DOT has also been working on ways to address the other weak link – alternative modal options. The second section of this chapter addresses DOT's progress in that regard. But a great impediment to investment in alternative modes is the existing development patterns, also within the control of local governments. It is not cost-effective to invest in infrastructure unless there is adequate population density to support it. For example, experience in other regions indicates that local bus service cannot be self-supporting unless it serves residential areas with a density of 17 units per acre. Very few of our urban centers have that density, let alone small towns with a 2 acre minimum lot size. Other modes have similar constraints. So, for the time being, there will be very little expansion of alternative modes into the region. However, the population and economy will continue to grow. It will once again be up to individual municipalities whether to regulate land uses to create a critical mass for alternatives. (Some communities, such as Unity and Winthrop, are already thinking along these lines.)

Three

The Transportation System: Needs and Issues

Highway System:

Overview:

The Highway system in Region 4 is organized into functional classifications, ranging from the Interstate system – 70 miles of which are in the region – to local roads, which are not DOT responsibility, and which number in the thousands of miles. They are also designated into "State Highways" – for which DOT has complete maintenance responsibility – and "State Aid" – for which municipalities share maintenance with the state. The table below shows the mileage and usage (1996 Vehicle Miles Traveled) of the non-local road system.

Table V
Pavement Miles and Vehicle Miles Traveled

Functional Classification	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Miles	VMT	Miles	VMT	Miles	VMT
Interstate	7.98	27,891,767	62.29	163,802,765	70.27	191,694,532
Principal Arterial	20.33	91,217,204	150.3	206,039,707	170.63	297,256,911
Minor Arterial	28.31	138,003,324	118.28	217,062,580	146.59	355,065,904
Collector	74.22	98,642,264	611.6	410,914,919	685.82	509,557,183
TOTAL:	130	355,754,559	942	997,819,971	1,073	1,353,574,530

Source: DOT

Arterial System:

The Non-Interstate Arterial System consists of the principal connectors between urban areas and production centers. In Region 4, the Arterial System consists of:

- U.S. Route 201, a north-south road stretching from one end of the region at the Canadian border to the other, at Gardiner. This is universally recognized as the most important corridor of the Kennebec Valley. In addition to providing long distance freight and passenger movements, Route 201 serves as the Main Street of at least 12 communities.

Route 201 has been nationally designated as the *Old Canada Road Scenic Byway* north of Madison, and is the backbone of the *Kennebec-Chaudiere International Corridor*. Route 201A diverges from Skowhegan north to Anson, following the river more closely through Norridgewock, and Madison. South of Skowhegan, the highway is classified as a mobility and retrograde arterial under DOT Access Management Rules, which govern how new access is designed.

- U.S. Route 2, the principal east-west road in Central Maine, entering the region at Mercer and departing at Palmyra. Route 2 has been designated as Maine's existing east-west highway, and is the only corridor in the region with a standing corridor committee. Route 2 is a mobility arterial and, between Norridgewock and Skowhegan, a retrograde as well.

- U.S. Route 202, from Monmouth to South China, and the portion of State Route 3 originating in Augusta and continuing east from the junction with 202 in South China. Routes 202/3 carry high volumes of commuter and seasonal traffic, as well as being a freight route between Augusta and Lewiston. Most of this corridor is classified as a mobility and retrograde arterial.

- State Route 27, running generally north-south, from Pittston, through Augusta to Rome, exiting the region and then re-entering it briefly at New Portland. This road is becoming increasingly important for commuting traffic near Augusta, and tourism from Augusta north. From Augusta south, Route 27 is labeled as a mobility and retrograde arterial.

- State Routes 104/139, the two routes originating (as arterials) in Waterville and Fairfield, combining and terminating as Route 139 in Norridgewock. This road carries a large percentage of freight traffic, but is also a commuter route. This corridor is classified as a mobility and retrograde arterial.

- State Routes 9/126, between Monmouth and Gardiner, in an area of high growth, liable to become more important as a commuter road. This highway is classified as a mobility corridor and for most of its length a retrograde as well.

- State Route 17, originating in Augusta and running through Chelsea and Windsor. Route 17 has commercial development expanding and commuter and tourist usage. It is classified as both mobility and retrograde arterial.

- State Route 133 through Winthrop and Wayne. Route 133 is primarily a freight route.

All arterial portions of Routes 2, 3, 104, 202, and 9, as well as parts of Routes 201 and 27, are also designated as mobility corridors for the purpose of access management. Most of those segments are also identified as Retrograde arterials.

According to information prepared for the Six-year Plan, there are only 15.5 miles of

"backlog" arterial remaining in the region. Since the DOT has a mandate now to eliminate the backlog within ten years, it appears as if the general condition of the arterial system is not an issue.

Collector System:

Finding: The collector road system, carrying almost the same VMT on more miles of road than the arterial system, has historically been underbuilt and underfunded..

The collector road system, sometimes known as "secondary roads," is much more extensive than the arterial system and receives lower traffic volumes though almost the same amount of VMT. Within this region, DOT has identified 58 Major Collector corridors, amounting to 686 miles.

Although collectors are universally considered to be a notch below arterials in importance, they are critical to many rural communities. Twenty towns of the 62 in this region have no arterial mileage within their borders, and therefore use the major collector as their primary road. Collectors are also heavily used for freight traffic associated with wood products and mineral extraction.

The backlog of improvements to collector roads is staggering in comparison to arterials. There are 339 miles of backlog in region 4. Only 14 of the 58 corridors in the region appeared in the DOT's Six-year Plan, and the backlog on those 14 amounted to over 78 miles. In the Department's current BTIP, only four corridors are proposed for improvements, for a total of 14 miles. At that rate, it would take 48 years to eliminate the backlog.

The condition and prospects for the collector road system is ranked as an issue of primary importance by RTAC 4. The major impediment is funding. The DOT has viewed the collector system as a lower priority than arterials, partly because of lower traffic counts, but also because the use of federal funds is limited. DOT has calculated the cost of eliminating the backlog over a reasonable period of time, but found the figures too high to put forward in a bond issue.

Other Highway Issues:

Finding: The proposed East-West Highway, regardless of where it is located, will be a complex mix of existing and new infrastructure.

An East-West Highway through Maine is not a new idea. Studies and corridor analyses have been published for over twenty years. After many years of dormancy, the issue has emerged again, mostly on the urging of advocacy groups form Eastern Maine. In 1999, a state-sponsored study was again performed, with mixed conclusions.

In the vision of East-West advocacy groups, a four-lane, limited access highway can be constructed from Calais to Bethel or Coburn Gore, generally following the alignment of Routes 2 and 9. In a strategy proposed by Governor King after the study was completed, portions of existing alignments would be improved on a gradual basis, with possible and eventual expansion onto new

alignment or additional lanes.

The Governor's initiative raises several issues in the RTAC 4 area. As the proposal is applied here, DOT is looking at the feasibility of a "two-lane, limited-access highway connecting I-95 in the Pittsfield-Burnham area to US Route 2 west of Norridgewock." The issues raised are: 1) where would this new alignment go, 2) how would Skowhegan and Norridgewock bridge projects fit in, and 3) what will be the role of existing Route 2?

The RTAC views this initiative as an opportunity to enhance existing infrastructure. A new alignment is not an immediate issue. There is strong support, from both the RTAC and the Route 2 Corridor Committee, for building Route 2 to NHS Standard – and maintaining it that way. There is also strong support for a new Kennebec River Bridge in Skowhegan and a replacement bridge in Norridgewock. We recognize that Route 2 has congestion issues in several central Maine locations, particularly Skowhegan. Any projects to improve East-West travel in this area should begin with the existing Route 2 and examine closely how new alignments can address the issues of congestion and community well-being. Since Route 2 is identified as both a mobility and retrograde arterial in the congested areas, state access management rules will also affect future travel conditions.

Finding: We tend to focus on the five "extraordinary bridge" projects in the region, at the risk of forgetting a growing problem with a host of bridges coming up for maintenance or replacement.

In general, the DOT is responsible for all highway bridges in the state with a span of ten feet or more. Bridges are repaired or replaced as a result of periodic inspections, and the funding available. The Department has identified bridge maintenance as a problem area, because many more bridges will be reaching the end of their service life in the next few decades than we have funding to replace. Just maintaining the status quo until 2016 will require an increase in state funding from $46 million per biennium to $80 million.

There is no information available on the specifics of the bridges in RTAC 4. Of concern to the RTAC, however, has been the "extraordinary bridge" projects in the region, including the Third Bridge in Augusta, the Memorial Bridge in Augusta, the replacement of the Fairfield Benton bridges, the second bridge in Skowhegan, and the replacement bridge in Norridgewock. These are project-level concerns, which need not be addressed in this report, but the RTAC is actively participating in planning for these bridges and their impacts.

The Freight Transportation System:

The Department's Office of Freight Transportation (OFT) oversees projects related to freight movement by rail, air, and water, as well as motor carriers. The OFT's guiding document is the Integrated Freight Plan, which addresses specific projects as well as integrating all elements of the freight system.

Motor Carrier Freight Movement:

Finding: This region depends heavily on the movement of heavy trucks, and those trucks constitute a good proportion of road use. Improving the network of heavy haul routes – through both project-level improvements and system management – is essential to healthy development.

Over the past couple of years, OFT has developed a map of the extent of the Heavy Haul Truck Network in the state. The purpose of this project was to better manage truck route designation and prioritize projects. The routes were identified based on Equivalent Single Axle Load data and public input. Identified routes in Region 4 are too numerous to name. That very fact would lead one to wonder if the distribution of freight traffic throughout the region is too dispersed to try to prioritize projects, or even designate freight routes.

KVCOG's analysis and input for this study, conducted in 1999, categorized regional freight routes into three areas:

- Category 1 routes carry all manner of freight, with the most important components being long-haul tractors. The category 1 roads correspond very closely with the principal arterial system.
- Category 2 routes carry a variety of freight, but mostly originating or destined for local points. That means that the majority of these routes are so identified because they have a major manufacturer or transportation node on one end or the other. Local highways that fall into this category include Route 9 (Augusta to Randolph), Route 32 (Winslow to Windsor), Route 37 (Smithfield to Waterville), Route 150, Route 201A (Norridgewock to Anson), Route 202 (China to Troy), the Albion-Benton Road, Leighton Road, Church Hill Road, Windsor Road (in Chelsea), and Winthrop Street in Hallowell.
- Category 3 routes are used primarily for conveyance of raw materials – principally raw logs and gravel. These roads present a special problem, because as collectors, they tend to be designed for a lesser weight standard but carrying mostly trucks that, more often than not, push the envelope for axle weights.

The RTAC recognizes that roads identified in the statewide heavy haul network accurately depict the network as it exists today. Nevertheless, from a planning perspective, we feel that work must be done on determining whether this is indeed the ideal network. Issues we think must be addressed include the evolution of manufacturing in the region, shifting priorities and choices among shippers, and the simple fact that the best roads tend to attract truck traffic, regardless of whether they are indeed the most efficient choice.

Finding: Concern remains over the issue of heavy truck impacts on state roads, despite changes proposed at the federal level.

A secondary issue for the RTAC at this point concerns vehicle weight limits and how they influence transportation choices. This issue can be looked at in two ways: 1) The difference between the federal weight limit on the Interstate System (basically 80,000 pounds) and the state-regulated

weight limits on state roads (generally pegged at 100,000 pounds) is strong incentive for heavier trucks to use the roads that can least support them; 2) the increase in size and weight of trucks overall creates problems for other users of the road (for example, tourists on the Old Canada Road Scenic Byway), as well as for roads not designed for current standards. The reason why this issue is listed as secondary is that we understand that the federal government is in the process of studying and proposing changes in weight limits for I-95, which is likely to change the dynamic.

Rail Freight System:

Finding: A competitive and accessible system of rail freight is essential as a cost-effective alternative to shipping by truck, and as a means of reducing highway use. Region 4 suffers from a lack of competition among rail carriers.

Region 4 is served by a number of rail lines and carriers, but the status of the system is in flux. Nationally, rail carriers are seeing a general resurgence of rail-based shipping; But Central Maine is not participating in that trend. One of our four carriers has withdrawn from service, one is pending sale, and another handles a very minimal amount of freight.

The largest carrier of rail freight in the region is Guilford Transportation's Springfield Terminal. Their trackage runs from Lewiston through Winthrop and Waterville towards Bangor. This line is known historically as the "Back Road." Waterville is the major stop on this line, as a Guilford maintenance facility and the location of an intermodal shipping terminal. Springfield Terminal also operates branch lines to Madison and Hinckley, and owns the trackage from Waterville to Augusta.

The rail line running east-west through Jackman, at the northern end of the region, is (at this writing) owned and operated by Bangor and Aroostook (Canadian American) Railroad. B&A has been experiencing financial problems, which has resulted in this route being underutilized. A transfer of ownership is in the works. While most rail traffic on this line runs express through the region, there is a small loading facility located in Jackman. This facility handles almost exclusively raw logs. B&A received funding several years ago for expansion of this facility, but this has never happened.

Remaining trackage in the region is owned by the State. It consists of two lines: The "Lower Road" runs along the Kennebec River, in State ownership south of Augusta. The former operator on this line, Maine Coast Railroad, lost its lease and is no longer operating. The other line is the Belfast and Moosehead Lake trackage, running from Burnham Junction south to the coast. This railroad is struggling, too, although it runs popular tourist excursions during the Summer and Fall.

Improvement of the rail freight system is ranked as a secondary issue by the RTAC, primarily because there are no clear avenues to improvement. Besides acquiring trackage, the state has made two investments in the region. The first, the intermodal center in Waterville, is stable, but not growing, as it deals with a general lack of shipping traffic and management issues. The second is an

expansion of the rail siding at the Sappi Paper Plant in Hinckley, funded through the state's Industrial Rail Access Program.

The Airport System:

Region 4 is the home of several smaller airports, used for both commercial and general aviation. The busiest of these is Augusta State Airport, which serves the Capitol Region. Waterville's LaFleur Airport has been designated as a free trade zone, though to date no additional business has been generated by that designation. There are three other general aviation airports in the region, in Norridgewock (Central Maine Airport), Jackman (Newton Field), and Pittsfield (Municipal Airport). Augusta, Waterville, and Norridgewock have all been identified as "Economic Development Airports."

There is a statewide Airport Master Plan, which identifies improvements needed at all public airports in the region.

Ports:

There are no seaports in the region. Shipping traffic originating in Portland, Searsport, and Belfast has only a minor impact on freight patterns in Region 4.

The Passenger Transportation System:

The DOT's Office of Passenger Transportation (OPT) has responsibility for projects and initiatives that facilitate movement of people. This includes modes of travel over the highway system as well as travel by foot, bike, rail, boat, and air. The Office's activities are guided by the Passenger Transportation Plan, referred to internally as "the Grand Plan."

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Network:

Finding: There are many projects and initiatives underway to improve infrastructure for bicycle and pedestrian use.

As awareness grows about the potential for bicycle travel as both a recreation and transportation form, the OPT has been creating new opportunities. One of these is the Maine Bicycle Map, depicting the highway system and highlighting traffic counts and shoulder widths. This map was published in 2000, and will be updated periodically. The RTAC's bicycle subcommittee met regularly during 2000 to submit a report for the Six-year Plan. The report detailed shoulder paving priorities for selected highways in the region.

There are several groups in Region 4 engaged in moving bicycle travel from the traditional roadside routes to safer, more leisurely venues. It is recognized that separate bike paths are ideal, from both the cyclist's and motorists's perspective. One of the first bike trails to appear in this

region was the "Multi-use Trail" running from Solon to Bingham. This trail, developed along an old railroad bed, sparked discussions of building a long-distance trail along the upper reaches of the Kennebec River. This idea may get a boost with the establishment of the Old Canada Road Scenic Byway.

The Augusta-Gardiner Rail Trail, paralleling the "lower Road" rail trackage between those two cities, has been in the planning and construction phase for several years, and during 2001 celebrated completion of the first phase. This trail is being closely watched because it is one of the first of its kind to run side-by-side with an operating railroad.

The DOT has also agreed to fund an engineering study of the Kennebec River Trail. This group wants to establish a bike trail through the Waterville region, extending north into Fairfield. This proposal has spun off more discussions about linking up a comprehensive bike network, connecting with the Augusta-Gardiner Trail and also northward along the river.

The East Coast Greenway is a new, regional initiative involving states up and down the eastern seaboard. In Maine, the proposed Greenway splits into a coastal route and an inland route. The inland route would run through Region 4, and it has been proposed that both the Augusta-Gardiner Trail and the Kennebec River Trail be incorporated into the route designated.

In part because of the large number of bicycle initiatives under way in Region 4, the RTAC has identified the expansion of the bike network as only a secondary issue for this report.

Pedestrian Ways, aka sidewalks, have been historically underfunded by both the state and municipalities. Existing sidewalks are rebuilt only when the adjoining road is, and new sidewalks are nearly unheard-of. The sidewalk network is limited to downtown areas of larger communities.

The DOT policy on sidewalks has for many years been that existing sidewalks would be replaced during road construction, but that any new sidewalks would have to be paid for entirely by the town. A recent change to the policy provides more flexibility in that regard, as well as a tie to local comprehensive plans. Under the new policy, towns are still responsible to pay the cost of a sidewalk if the road is a local or minor collector, or if the request comes in after the BTIP is published. But if the town makes the request at the time of the six year plan, their share is reduced to 50 %, and if the proposed sidewalk is inside a municipally-designated growth area with 75 foot lot frontages, the share could be reduced to as little as 10 %.

Rail Passenger Service:

Finding: With the reintroduction of passenger rail service to Portland, new energy has been added to discussions about extending that rail service into Region 4.

The DOT's vision for a rail system includes a backbone of regular service, as well as the adaptation of branch lines to service tourist destinations. The tourist angle is promoted in OPT's

"Explore Maine" Initiative; However, RTAC 4 is more concerned about extending full service passenger rail to Bangor through the region.

With that in mind, RTACs 3, 4, and 5 have formed an inter-regional committee named the Maine Rail Passenger Corridor Committee. This committee has been meeting regularly for over a year, with the intent to promote the reintroduction of passenger service to Brunswick-Augusta-Waterville-Bangor. During the Summer of 2001, the MRPCC adopted a set of recommendations for endorsement by the RTACs. These recommendations are as follows:

- Extend AMTRAK service to Brunswick
- Update Maine's Strategic Passenger Transportation Plan of January, 1999, its relevant maps, plus forthcoming MDOT transportation plans to identify the Brunswick-Augusta-Waterville-Bangor rail corridor as a future passenger route linking southern and northern Maine, with connections to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.
- MDOT Should undertake appropriate actions with respect to state-owned route segments and maintain communications with all necessary public and private interests aimed at preserving this contiguous corridor and its related infrastructure for future passenger and freight rail services.
- Strategic plans for the Cities of Augusta, Waterville, and Bangor should identify and reserve locations accessible to the rail line for stations, parking and intermodal connections that will best serve the interests of these communities and their service regions. At Waterville, preference should be considered for a passenger station site that is accessible to both the Kennebec River and Lewiston railroad lines.

At its October, 2001 meeting, the RTAC endorsed these recommendations by consensus.

Public Transportation Systems:

Finding: Publicly-operated bus systems can go a long ways toward reducing congestion and VMT, particularly in urban areas, and is an underutilized resource.

The primary public transportation system in Region 4 is Kennebec Valley Transit, operated by Kennebec Valley Community Action Program (KVCAP). Kennebec Transit runs both a fixed-route service, open to the general public, in Augusta, Farmingdale, Hallowell, Gardiner, Randolph, Fairfield, and Waterville, and a demand-response service (KV Transit) throughout Kennebec and Somerset Counties. The fixed-route service carried 38,732 passengers from July, 1996 to June, 1997. The program also supports a team of volunteer drivers.

Funding for transit is based on availability from the federal government. Though funds are available, the program is constrained by the match requirement. This match can only be met with local funding and fare box revenue. These are insufficient to access the full amount available to this region.

An OPT Program called "GO AUGUSTA" was operated by Maine Tomorrow in Hallowell until 2001. This program was designed to explore many demand-management ideas identified by an Augusta-Gardiner-Winthrop Demand Management Study. GO AUGUSTA managed the nine-vehicle State Vanpool, organized the Lunchtime Trolley in Augusta (Using KV Transit facilities), and operated a ride-matching service in the area. The program was merged with similar programs around the state and converted to "GO MAINE" in 2002.

A much-overlooked public transit system in place for years are the school busses operated by municipalities and school districts throughout the region. Though they serve a limited ridership, it is a large one – a huge percentage of public-school students. One shudders to think how many more passenger miles would be on our highway system if each family had to transport its own children to school. Nevertheless, this is the trend. More and more parents are driving the children to or from school, for a variety of reasons ranging from expanded extra-curricular activities to the bus not being "cool." This is an issue not yet being addressed by DOT.

The RTAC recognizes large potential for improvements to transit services, resulting in significant decreases in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). Transit systems are not being funded or utilized to their potential. For these reasons, RTAC 4 has determined that this is a primary issue.

Intermodal Infrastructure:

Finding: It would be short-sighted to develop a quality system of alternative transportation choices without ensuring that people will be able to switch from one alternative to another with ease.

A characteristic of passenger travel options is that few of them offer the opportunity to travel from origin to destination without changing modes. Therefore, it is important, if we are to increase the attractiveness of these modes, to assure a quick and efficient means of changing modes. This means, bus and train stations, park-and-ride lots, and other intermodal structures.

The best example of intermodal infrastructure in the region is the network of park-and-ride lots, available for motorists who wish to carpool or vanpool. State-recognized lots in Region 4 include:

- Gardiner, Turnpike Exit 14, 32 spaces
- Gardiner, Brunswick Ave., 40 spaces
- Monmouth, Route 202, Fish and Game lot, 8 spaces
- Pittsfield, Somerset Shopping Plaza, 60 spaces
- Randolph, Route 27, 50 spaces
- Randolph, Route 27, 20 spaces
- Winthrop, St. Francis Catholic Church, 10 spaces

There are also several informal park-and-ride sites scattered throughout the region.

Other intermodal links are less obvious or non-existent. Small advances are being made, such as bike carriers installed on KV Transit busses, and planning for a passenger rail station in Waterville. But the apparent lack of investment in these facilities, heightened by the fact that many of these modes are operated by private or semi-public entities, has contributed to the conclusion by RTAC 4 that these links are an issue of primary importance.

Air Passenger Service:

Air passenger service in Region 4 is provided directly, by Augusta State Airport, and on a larger scale out of the region by Portland and Bangor Jetports. Augusta has a minimal level of service by one carrier flying to Boston. The City of Augusta manages the airport.

Charter passenger flight arrive occasionally at other airports in the region, notable LaFleur in Waterville and Central Maine in Norridgewock. The DOT, as part of its "Explore Maine" package, is encouraging greater passenger-side use of airports in or near tourist destinations. However, the lack of usage and low visibility of local airports has motivated the RTAC to rank improvements to passenger air service as a secondary issue.

Four

Public Participation

Approach and Methodology:

In the development of issues and recommendations for this report, the DOT and RTAC recognized that all voices in the region with a stake in the transportation system needed to be included in our deliberations. This posed a bit of a problem. While there are some well-defined stakeholder groups who can be counted on to express their views, the majority of the region (and the majority of opinion on the issues) is lost in the general hubbub. In order to access all points of view, the RTAC developed an active program for outreach and comment, as follows:

Outreach Purpose: Inform stakeholders of the process, the significance of the outcome, opportunities for input.

Venues: *Interest Groups* – KVCOG/MDOT staff visited the following groups in early 2001:

KVCOG Executive Board (municipal reps.) – April 25th
Somerset Municipal Association (Somerset municipal reps) – April 25th
Somerset Economic Development Corp. (ED professionals, business) – May 18th
GO AUGUSTA (demand management) advisory board – July 16th

Structured contacts – KVCOG staff contacted municipalities and attended local meetings on a regular basis. KVCOG prepared a fact sheet for distribution at these meetings.

Media – KVCOG/MDOT prepared press releases for paper media concerning the RAR and posted informational pages on our respective websites and articles for organizational newsletters.

Public Comment: At all RTAC meetings beginning May, 2001, RTAC opened the floor for comment from members of the public attending. Outside of meetings, KVCOG/MDOT accepted written comments and forwarded all comments to RTAC members.

Outreach Results:

Each of the groups identified as "interest groups" above, was contacted by KVCOG and asked for time for a presentation. KVCOG was placed on the agenda and spoke to four of the five groups (Kennebec Valley Chamber was interested but never scheduled a time) on the dates shown above. KVCOG prepared a presentation covering the overall planning process at DOT and how the

Regional Advisory Report fits in. KVCOG also prepared a guide to participation. This guide is reproduced in the box, below.

How you can Participate:

Attend an RTAC Meeting. The next scheduled RTAC meeting is May 8, 2001, from 8-10:30 at the Skowhegan Community Center. For a schedule of future meetings, contact Guy Whittington, at DOT (287-6815) or KVCOG's Chris Huck (453-4258 x25). Every RTAC meeting has an opportunity for public comment, and most agenda items allow for free discussion between RTAC members and others in attendance.

Attend a public hearing. Formal public hearings will be held at several locations throughout the region, beginning in September or October. By the time of the hearings, the RTAC should have draft findings and recommendations.

Submit written comments. Written comments, either original thoughts or response to proposals, may be addressed to DOT or KVCOG offices, or any RTAC member. The full RTAC will receive and may discuss any comments.

Work through a special interest committee. There are many transportation-oriented committees working and contributing to the plan. They include the public advisory committees for bridge projects, the Old Canada Road Scenic Byway Committee, the Route 2 Corridor Committee, and the RTAC Bicycle Committee. DOT is also looking for volunteers to form a Route 201 Committee. While most of these committees have fixed membership, all of them allow for public input, and will be playing a role in the upcoming process.

Join the RTAC. The RTAC is the committee directly responsible for preparing the Regional Advisory Report, and for other planning projects, including ranking projects for the Six-year Plan. Terms of the RTAC are for three years. At the end of June, a number of current members' terms will be expiring, leaving vacancies to fill. Applications for appointment to the RTAC may be obtained from DOT or KVCOG.

Following the development of the program outline, KVCOG identified several other transportation-related "special interest committees:" The Route 2 Corridor Committee, the Old Canada Road Scenic Byway, the Kennebec River Trail, the Maine Passenger Rail Corridor Committee, and the Region 4 bicycle committee. Each of these committees was contacted by mail and also through their liaison on the RTAC, where available, with a request to participate. In most cases, the committee has submitted comments, proposed recommendations, or has made comments at the RTAC. It is noted, however, that these special interest committees, once they have established contact with DOT, do not feel it necessary, for the most part, to coordinate or compete for attention in the long range planning process.

Municipal officials were informed by mail of the RAR process, receiving the presentation prepared for the interest groups, the "How you can participate" page, and an offer by KVCOG to visit the town personally to discuss issues. KVCOG received expressions of interest from Solon and China, and met in town with the latter. [Each municipal official will receive a subsequent mailing informing them of time and place of the public hearings.]

KVCOG published information on the RAR public participation process in its own quarterly newsletter, mailed to approximately 1,500 municipal officials and economic development contacts. KVCOG prepared and sent information 'on background" to the Morning Sentinel, Bangor Daily News, and Kennebec Journal.

Five

RTAC Advice

This section contains detailed recommendations from the RTAC to the Department, for actions by it and other responsible transportation entities. Although the recommendations are divided into three tiers of importance, the RTAC wishes it noted that even those priorities labeled "Third" are a *priority* over and above many other issues not even addressed here. These priorities have been assigned as relative measures of importance, and no attempt has been made to rank them as short- or long-term in the sense of timing. In addition, the recommendations have been made in the context of a comprehensive approach, so that many of them relate to each other and cannot be implemented separately. The assigned priority grouping are as follows:

FIRST PRIORITY (the 3 highest priorities as scored by the RTAC: Freight Routes, Public Transit, Land Use)
SECOND PRIORITY (the next 3 scores: Collector Roads, Passenger Rail, Modal Links)
THIRD PRIORITY (all others)

FIRST PRIORITY:

Regional Goal: Improve the movement of highway freight, to serve the regional economy and minimize negative traffic impacts.

[Note: This priority addresses the combined issues of truck weights and DOT's Freight Route policy)

Reaching this goal will have measurable effects on the regional transportation system:

- The current network of haul routes includes congestion points. Network improvements should be designed to ease congestion points.
- Mobility is a factor in designating freight routes. Access management standards will control access on some existing haul routes, improving mobility. Further action is necessary to designate ideal routes, taking into account current and future access conditions and prospective corridor and use changes.
- Improvement of freight routes may have contradictory effects on development patterns. Improved roads may become attractive as commuter routes in addition to freight, but tight access management and the frequency of heavy trucks might inhibit sprawl tendencies.
- Safety ratings (crash rates) should be a factor in designating freight routes.
- Designating and improving haul routes should improve conditions in local economies. However, the artificial choices produced by the weight restrictions on the interstate system continue to have a negative impact.

STRATEGIES:

- Prior to investing in the existing system, we need to do a more detailed analysis of existing and potential freight movements, with the goal of identifying the ideal system. This will involve the following steps (rough chronological order):
  - KVCOG should collect information on freight origins and destinations (build on prior work), as well as potential new freight generators (industrial parks and local growth areas) and intermodal links.
  - DOT should develop information on long-haul highway use through this region, truck-related crash rates, current road conditions, and impacts on public safety and congestion. DOT should also provide up-to-date information on weight limit policies.
  - The RTAC should use information collected plus personal knowledge to propose a scaled-down (from DOT's current designation) network of "ideal" freight routes. The RTAC should also define criteria for future additions to the network as conditions change and new corridors open up.
  - The RTAC should test its proposed network by means of stakeholder engagements. Stakeholders should include shippers, carriers, and local development officials.
  - The DOT should propose an investment mechanism and standard under which designated freight routes can be identified and improved.
- The DOT and RTAC should work together to plan improvements to the identified freight network. Some areas that will need attention are:
  - Prioritization of significant improvements, such as truck rest stops or climbing lanes.
  - Developing a protocol for alleviating conflict between truckers and tourists on certain routes.
  - Applying the more stringent "mobility arterial" access standards to freight routes, even those that are collectors, and preserving possible future routes.
  - Developing a position and strategy for eliminating the anomalies in weight limits which cause truckers to make artificial routing choices.
- The RTAC should develop guidelines for incorporating freight routes and freight hauling issues into local comprehensive planing.
- The DOT should support initiatives for increased monitoring of truck weights, including checkpoints at state entry points and border crossings.

FIRST PRIORITY:
Regional Goal: Increase usage of publicly-funded transit systems

Reaching this goal will have measurable effects on the regional transportation system:

- Increased use of general-purpose transit or school busses will alleviate congestion, with related improvements to public safety.
- Improved public transit systems will provide incentive to live in serviced areas, whether they are rural/small-town suburbs, or urban areas.
- Transit systems are generally safer than private vehicles.
- Transit systems have the potential to improve local economic opportunity in the areas which they

service, by improving access to potential customers and workers.

STRATEGIES:

The RTAC, DOT, and affected communities must address both development and operational improvements to meet this goal:

- Operational measures, can be addressed with the following strategies:
  - The RTAC should improve communication between stakeholders to garner public support and potential expansion of public transit and related services. Potential stakeholders are transit providers, private carriers, economic development officials, social services, local officials
  - DOT should make the case to local governments for increased and coordinated transit opportunities, including stable funding for KV Transit.
  - DOT should continue funding/expansion of commuter options initiatives.
  - DOT should begin dialogue with the Department of Education concerning integration of the school bus system with a wider public transit strategy.
- Development and Infrastructure is a multi-level problem: 1) retrofitting of existing nodes of commercial/residential/employment for transit accessibility; 2) establishing land use planning and design standards for transit-friendly new development; and 3) encouraging developer-financed investments in transit infrastructure.
  - Sponsor a stakeholder forum on the issue of development planning for transit (may be integrated with Track One.)
  - The RTAC and KVCOG should use the stakeholder forum and local knowledge to identify emerging employment nodes (e.g. industrial parks) and mechanisms to make them transit-friendly.
  - The DOT should fund pilot projects which encourage private developers to integrate transit development into projects and, in conjunction with SPO and regional councils, use these pilots to develop design standards for transit-oriented development and transit adaptations for new development
  - KVCOG should establish a program to assist towns in local land use planing for transit.

FIRST PRIORITY:

Regional Goal: Recognize that Transportation and Community Development issues are fundamentally interrelated, and work towards implementation of a unified approach.

Reaching this goal will have measurable effects on the regional transportation system:

- ♦ Coordinated land use planning and community development will result in a lessening of congestion, by reducing sprawl and managing access points.
- ♦ Public safety will be enhanced by strategies which promote better development access.
- ♦ Economic development may be constrained short-term in some locations by new development rules, but will benefit long-term from a more efficiently-functioning transportation system.

STRATEGIES:

- The DOT should work with the state legislature and municipalities to strengthen the concept of

corridor-level land use planning.

- · The DOT should continue to improve and broaden the applicability of the Highway Entrance (Access Management) Law and regulations.
- · The DOT should allow corridor committees to analyze and make recommendations regarding access management and development, even for non-mobility arterials such as Route 201 north of Skowhegan and Route 27 north of Augusta.
- · KVCOG should identify priority development corridors within the region and work with municipalities to develop regional approaches to land use planning.

• The DOT should promote the benefits to be derived from a coordinated approach to Community Development and Transportation Planning.

- · The DOT should sponsor forums, with RTAC members, planning groups and municipal officials for the purpose of exploring and defining the relationship between community development and transportation.
- · The DOT should identify physical changes to the transportation system that will improve local communities, and funding to make those improvements.
- · The DOT, SPO, and other interested agencies should cooperate on a program to explore new development approaches that will meet dual objectives of community enhancement and transportation system efficiency.

SECOND PRIORITY:

Regional Goal: Make collector road improvements in such a way as will benefit from and support local and regional land use planning.

Reaching this goal will have measurable effects on the regional transportation system:

- ♦ Access management for minor collectors is now limited to sight distance, drainage, design
- ♦ Access management for major collectors is more comprehensive on design but not location.
- ♦ Improvements to collectors could act as incentive for rural sprawl, unless tied to local land use planning.
- ♦ Improving some collectors could improve rural economies by making it easier to transport raw materials, products, and people. Access management standards could create an unintended effect of shifting of new business location to collectors.
- ♦ Because of road design and generally lower law enforcement, rural collectors now have twice the death rate of urban roads and interstates, which must be reduced.
- ♦ The cost of improving collectors is a significant impediment.

STRATEGIES:

• The DOT should establish a closer link between collector road corridor improvements and local land use planning. The following program is recommended:

- · The RTAC should take the Major Collector corridors listed in each six year plan and make a more detailed analysis, examining their impact on community character, local planning, regional needs, and economic efficiency.
- · KVCOG should provide information on local and regional planning and economic development efforts, including development planned or in progress and regulations in

place that would affect use of the corridor.

- In order of their priority, the RTAC should organize corridor-specific forums consisting of business and municipal officials to identify safety issues and set goals and priorities for the improvement. If possible, the RTAC member best acquainted with the corridor should coordinate the forum.
- The DOT should use the forum as a basis to implement context-sensitive design principles for the improvement.
- KVCOG should work with municipalities within high priority collector corridors to assess the impact on local land use plans and assure good access management.

- The DOT should re-assess its match requirements for minor collector projects, perhaps substituting an incentive-based match to promote local corridor planning and access management regulation.

SECOND PRIORITY:
Regional Goal: Restoration of rail passenger service to this Region

Reaching this goal will have measurable effects on the regional transportation system:

- Rail passenger service through the Kennebec Valley will focus economic activity near station points in the centers of Waterville, Augusta, and possibly other towns.
- Rail passenger service would improve mobility on some interstate and arterial roads, with a corresponding improvement to public safety; Congestion could increase slightly and intermittently in the vicinity of train stations.
- Regional and/or commuter service between Kennebec cities, Bangor, and Portland would increase incentives for people to relocate to this region, at the same time improving economic potential, transportation options and job opportunities for the region.
- Rail tourism can be an economic contributor to the region and the state. Pending sale of the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad, including the Canadian American Railroad (CDAC) through Jackman makes the future of a potential east-west excursion route uncertain.

STRATEGIES:

- RTAC 4, together with RTAC's 3 and 5, endorses to DOT the following recommendations of their joint subcommittee:
  - Officially recognize the Brunswick - Augusta - Waterville - Bangor corridor as a future passenger rail route.
  - Preserve this route and its rail infrastructure for future upgrade to passenger standards.
- The RTAC and DOT should work with representatives of Augusta, Waterville, and other communities on issues affecting future service for long-distance and commuter rail, such as station locations, intermodal connections, parking, and convenient access from major roads, e.g. Augusta bridge approaches.
- Public acceptance and use of the *Downeaster* and its proposed extension to Brunswick are critical prerequisites to extension of passenger service through this region. DOT should schedule and conduct feasibility studies, negotiations with private owners, and funding requests in accordance with the *Downeaster* experience.

- DOT should facilitate the continued operation of the Canadian Atlantic (CDAC) corridor through Jackman for rail tourism.

SECOND PRIORITY:
Regional Goal: Improve linkages between passenger modes of travel

Reaching this goal will have measurable effects on the regional transportation system:

- ♦ Improved linkages will motivate commuters and others to become more efficient in their transportation choices, which will improve mobility and may have a positive effect on local employers and businesses.
- ♦ Siting will be critical to determining whether intermodal linkages will work to promote sprawl or discourage it.

STRATEGIES:

- DOT should expand the accessability of park-and-ride lots, including increasing capacity, adding new lots, and connecting with bicycle and pedestrian facilities and public transit services.
- DOT should work with service center towns on building and improving facilities for passenger trains, busses, air travel, carpooling, bicycle storage, or other needs as identified.
- In planning for new river crossings (such as the third bridge in Augusta and the second bridge in Skowhegan) and other major road projects, DOT should accommodate linkages for other modes, including prospective passenger rail and bike route access.
- DOT planning for airports and rail stations should include access to taxi and transit services wherever possible. The DOT should work with private taxi providers to improve service availability and standards.
- The RTAC should compile a list of desired bridge enhancements, such as extra width for snowmobiles or bicycles, design enhancements, lighting, or pedestrian walkways.
- The DOT should improve intermodal connections at Augusta State Airport, including taxi, transit, and possible airport shuttle from Waterville.

THIRD PRIORITY:
Regional Goal: Improve the East-West movement of traffic and goods within this region, using the most cost-effective means available, including existing alignments

[Note: This approach recognizes and attempts to resolve strongly-contrasting views on the future of east-west traffic, whether by "new corridor," "existing alignment," or "alternate mode."]

Reaching this goal will have measurable effects on the regional transportation system:

- ♦ A new alignment or alternate modes could improve mobility on existing Route 2 in Skowhegan (Norridgewock to a lesser degree). Using the existing alignment will not solve congestion problems.
- ♦ A new alignment would be limited access; existing alignment has unlimited access currently, but will come under DOT's "Mobility Arterial" standard

- ♦ Regardless of alignment, improved east-west travel will have some positive economic impacts. But at the same time, improved mobility would likely increase the potential for sprawl and should be accompanied by stronger land use planning and regulation.
- ♦ Existing Route 2 within Norridgewock and Skowhegan now considered "retrograde" (unsafe)
- ♦ Using existing alignment or building a new highway are clearly public issues with string constituencies. Public attitudes on these issues are somewhat polarized.

STRATEGIES:

- A public advisory committee should be formed ASAP to deal with all elements of this issue.
  - · The committee could grow from the existing Route 2 Corridor Committee or be a separate one.
  - · It would be premature to call this a "project advisory committee," but it would act as a venue to channel public information and opinion.
  - · The RTAC should be a close partner with this new committee, but should not become the committee, in order to maintain its overall regional perspective. The RTAC should be pro-active and well-informed on issues of alignment and local impacts.
  - · The new committee will need to have a channel for communication with similar committees in other regions.
- The DOT should utilize information from these sources in the course of context-sensitive design review for any proposed improvements.
- Unless (and until) it can be demonstrated that any new alignment will be commenced within the time frame of a six-year plan, the DOT should continue to make improvements to capacity and traffic flow along Route 2 as if there is no viable alternative.
- Any improvements to the east-west road system must be planned and designed to connect with other available passenger and freight modes.

THIRD PRIORITY:
Regional Goal: Increased usage of rail freight system

Reaching this goal will have measurable effects on the regional transportation system:

- ♦ Rail freight that moves directly between points of origin and destination will reduce the potential for congestion and safety impacts from truck traffic. Intermodal transfers between rail and truck may contribute to isolated areas of congestion.
- ♦ Freight rail service, particularly intermodal, will become more important to the region's direct shippers of commodities like wood pulp, minerals, chemicals, grains, steel, LP gas, and container goods. At the same time, both potential users and providers of rail freight transportation are private entities making complex decisions. Opportunities in public policy exist to preserve and improve the region's freight-carrying infrastructure.
- ♦ The availability of an alternative to truck freight carriers will improve the economic viability of local manufacturers.
- ♦ Impending sale and potential breakup of the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad threatens continued operation of the CDAC east-west line through Jackman.

STRATEGIES:

- The RTAC should design and conduct individual discussions with significant stakeholders including current and potential users, providers, and industrial development interests, and organize public stakeholder forum(s) to identify and prioritize realistic strategies to guide public and private investment decisions.
- To play a credible and ongoing role in this process, the RTAC should have regular briefings on rail transportation economics within the region, and establish regular contact with stakeholders and DOT's Office of Freight Transportation.
- DOT should evaluate the impact of the potential CDAC corridor closure on present and future freight transportation options for the region and state. The impact of rail freight tonnage diverted to trucks on east-west roads across the region should be considered.

THIRD PRIORITY:

Regional Goal: Continue to improve and connect the regional bicycle and pedestrian networks.

Reaching this goal will have measurable effects on the regional transportation system:

- ♦ Increased opportunities for pedestrian and bike travel will improve mobility. However, on-road bike routes may lead to more congestion and safety problems in already-congested areas.
- ♦ Improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities may make densely-developed areas more attractive, thus reducing incentive to sprawl.
- ♦ Bicycle and pedestrian facilities may be negatively impacted by unrestricted or poorly-designed access points. Many of these facilities will be located inside urban compact areas, where DOT access rules will not apply.
- ♦ Added bike and pedestrian facilities will have a minor effect on public safety and economic opportunity.

***STRATEGIES*:**

- The DOT should put a higher priority on sidewalk network development/improvement.
- The RTAC and DOT should address the issue of connectivity between the various existing and planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities, either through a forum, or an extended planning process.
- The DOT and RTAC should establish a process for evaluating individual bicycle improvements, including the following:
  - · DOT should limit improvements to shoulders in portions of the collector highway system to where they would contribute to bicycle safety.
  - · In areas where shoulders have been improved as bike routes, DOT should put a high priority on signage and striping so that the effect is not negated by higher vehicle speeds.
  - · DOT should compare the relative costs and benefits of on-road vs, off-road bicycle investments.
  - · The RTAC and DOT should put a high priority on bicycle route improvements that will connect areas of existing transportation user potential, such as high-density residential neighborhoods and shopping centers.

- DOT, with KVCOG staff assistance, should resurrect the bicycle committee, to assist in the above strategies.
- Bike trails must be part of a larger regional network designated in the six-year plan.

THIRD PRIORITY:
Regional Goal: Maintain regional connectivity to national and international air travel networks.

Reaching this goal will have measurable effects on the regional transportation system:

- ♦ Maintaining a connection to the air travel network for both passenger and freight movements is critical to maintaining a healthy local economy, reducing congestion, and improving public safety.
- ♦ Local airports help to relieve congestion at larger, more urban airports, such as Bangor and Portland.

STRATEGIES:

- The DOT, together with local airport managers, should prepare better marketing and public relations materials, and a program for delivering them to potential tenants at regional business and industrial parks.
- The DOT and RTAC should find ways to support local general aviation airports in developing appropriate, niche roles in the regional economy.